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SUBJECT: CHAD: OPPOSITION ADAMANT ABOUT BOYCOTTING ELECTION

REF: A. A. NDJAMENA 351

[¶](#)B. B. NDJAMENA 352

[¶](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The opposition coalition rejects UNDP's proposal for participating in the May 3 election and intends to call for boycott and, possibly, obstruction of the election. End Summary

[¶](#)2. (SBU) On March 8 Poloff called on Lol Mahamat Choua, leader of the Kanembou ethnicity (northeast of Lake Chad) and one of the principal figures in Chad's opposition coalition CPDC. Poloff asked Lol if he had been contacted by UNDP resrep Amaning, and if so, what he thought of the latter's proposals. (Per ref B, Amaning met President Deby March 1 and floated with him the idea of attracting the opposition into the May 3 election with the inducement of serious electoral reform targeted at subsequent communal and legislative elections.) Lol said he had met Amaning the previous evening and told him that, while he appreciated Amaning's effort, the CPDC totally rejected the proposal.

[¶](#)3. (SBU) Lol said that the opposition (and, in fact, he claimed, the entire Chadian population) was fed up with Deby.

The last straw was the fraudulent referendum last summer that changed the constitution to allow Deby to run for a third term. (Note: Lol agreed to participate in the 2001 presidential election under the promise from Deby that he would not run again.) Amaning's idea to begin electoral reform with a view to the communal and legislative elections, according to Lol, suffered the major flaw that the election that really mattered in Chad was the presidential election. Once Deby was reelected, he would instantly go back on his promise to UNDP. He would not accept free communal and legislative elections, based on his track record of lies over 15 years.

[¶](#)4. (SBU) Asked what role the CPDC intended to play in the coming election, Lol said that the CPDC would not only boycott the election, it would call for obstruction of the election. Lol said that he had always rejected any form of violence in the political arena, but he admitted that "obstruction" could involve violence, because opposition supporters would respond to anticipated violence from the

government with violence.

¶15. (SBU) Lol was bitterly critical of French support of Deby. "We are no longer a colony of France." The French, he said, took a dismal view of Chad which was incorrect. Chad was not, he said, a country riven by unbridgeable ethnic and religious divides; it was not a difficult country to govern. Deby was not the source of security and stability; he was the cause of insecurity and instability. Asked about the February 7 demonstration against the Danish cartoons, which had turned violent, Lol (a Muslim) insisted that episode was staged by Deby ("no demonstration occurs in Chad if Deby does not order it") and should not be taken as evidence of inter-religious discord. A few hooligans had given a bad name to Islam in Chad. But Lol also regretted that the Saudis and Libyans had been pouring money into building mosques rather than schools.

¶16. (SBU) The previous day, May 7, poloff called on another member of CPDC, Salibou Garba (Christian from Moundou). Garba had not yet seen Amaning, but his remarks suggested that he would be equally hostile to any proposition that suggested participation in the May 3 election. He also described the overland trip that the CPDC leaders had just made to Moundou in the South, where unexpectedly large crowds had gathered despite the myriad blockages thrown in their way by the government. He noted that Saleh Kebzabo (opposition leader from Lere in the South), who he said normally was not the most outspoken of the principal CPDC figures, had addressed the crowd and specifically called on them to obstruct the coming election, to which he received a raucous ovation. Garba acknowledged the violent overtones of this call to obstruction. In a interview with an opposition newspaper March 9, another leading member of the CPDC, Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh (Muslim from Biltine), was quoted saying, "We will use every means in our possession to obstruct the holding of this election." He said that the CPDC had demonstrated its cohesion over the two years of its existence and would remain a unified force.

¶17. (SBU) On May 9, poloff called on another prominent member of the CPDC, General Wadal Abdelkader Kamougue (Christian from Sarh). The elderly Kamougue had not accompanied his colleagues to the South, for health reasons, nor had he yet talked with the UNDP resrep. He said his position was simple: he and the other members of the CPDC would totally boycott the May 3 election. Asked whether he any other strategy for May 3, he said no, just stay home. Bitter in his condemnation of the Deby regime and with French support for it, Kamougue however gave an opposing analysis to Lol's: Chad was a very divided country and indeed difficult to govern, and the roots of the problem lay with the French colonial policy, which did not seek to bind north, center, and south together but administered them separately so there was no concept of nation at independence. Comment: Either way, the French get the blame.

¶18. (SBU) Meanwhile, the third congress of the ruling party MPS concluded May 8, dragging on to five days, three days longer than expected. The issue of debate was whether to keep on Mahamat Hisseine as MPS's Secretary General. Most local observers expected him to be replaced, on account of the low voter turnout for the June 6 referendum. He gave a spirited speech to the congress defending his record, condemning corruption and lethargy in the party, and berating the government for inefficiency. Deby pondered what to do for two days while party stalwarts cooled their heels at the congress, and then he decided to keep Mahamat Hisseine in place. Comment: Deby may have viewed this indirect criticism as a form of healthy letting off steam as well as a useful message to the party faithful to redouble their efforts for the coming election.

TAMLYN